

Something old ... something new



The 5th hole at The Ledges Golf Club in York, Maine.

Cape Arundel GC resurrecting Travis' design from 1921

By MARK LESLIE

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine — Noted architect Walter Travis built Cape Arundel Golf Club here in 1921. George Herbert Walker kept the front nine open during World War II and grandson George Bush, the former president, calls it his home course. Its mere 5,869 yards has beaten up on such luminaries as England's John Majors and Canada's Brian Mulroony, and on such golf greats as Arnold Palmer, Hale Irwin, Doug Sanders and Jose Marie Olazabel.

In July, Fred Couples and Davis Love III visited Bush and played Cape Arundel for a week, shooting a best of 65 in generally calm conditions on a site where winds can ravage a golf game.

"The old girl still holds up," remarked Bruce Hepner, a golf course architect with Tom Doak's Renaissance Golf Design in Traverse City, Mich., who is renovating Cape Arundel.

Calling the course "a great example of architecture," Hepner said it has "the two great variables in golf: putting surfaces and wind. Those are the great equalizers of golf. They will stabilize anybody."

Besides that, Hepner said: "There is quirky stuff here. But that's what I love about these old golf courses. There is character to them. Man has a hard time

The state of Maine is a microcosm of the entire country. New course construction... old course renovation and restoration... nine-hole additions from the Atlantic Ocean to the White Mountains. Great tracks like the Walter Travis-designed Cape Arundel Golf Club and Donald Ross-created Poland Spring Golf Club are being restored. Members at Penobscot Valley Country Club and Augusta Country Club — both Ross designs — are seriously considering restoration work. And at the same time new tracks, like Brad Booth-designed The Ledges Golf Club in York (at left), Dan Maples-designed Dunegrass in Old Orchard Beach (at right) and Clive Clark-created Belgrade Lakes (Maine) Golf Club, have opened.

This abundance of work is keeping course architects, builders and superintendents bustling from East Coast to West. Here we take a look at two particular projects in Maine.



Cape Arundel Golf Club's 18th green complex, with its bunkers and green restored to the way Walter Travis built it nearly 80 years ago.

making character. It's more difficult to make something look natural. Nature is random, very random."

Using old deeds, photographs, aerial photos, and Turn of the Tide magazine stories about Travis and his 16-man crew working here, Hepner has gone far in restoring the course's original greens and returning long-extinct bunkers.

Although not a lot is known about Travis' design philosophy — he was not a prolific writer like George Thomas or A.W. Tillinghast — Hepner said of the

three-time U.S. Amateur and one-time British Amateur champion: "Travis was a great player and one of the great putters of his time. He wrote a book about it, in fact. You see that here [in his design]. You have to have a short game here to be a player. Length has nothing to do with it. Equipment hasn't changed this course."

"We're doing fine brush-stroking," Hepner said, "getting the course back to the original elements of its design."

Foremost has been returning the

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The 17th hole at Dunegrass in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

Poland Spring GC reclaiming Ross' famous bunkering

By MARK LESLIE

POLAND SPRING, Maine — "Donald Ross was the father of golf architecture in the United States. He was the best. He still is one the best. But he's gone," says Dick Fahey. So Fahey, the course superintendent at Poland Spring Golf Club here, has shouldered the burden of restoring the track to the way Ross envisioned it.

Despite Ross' fame, Poland Spring Resort owners Mel and Cindy Robbins were not aware he had designed their course until Fahey attended a workshop taught by golf course architect and historian Geoffrey Cornish in 1988. "Cornish told me Poland Spring was a Ross course — an addition of nine and a revised nine," Fahey said.

The original nine holes, Fahey discovered, were designed by Arthur H. Fenn in 1896. In 1910 Ross visited the property, revised the original nine and added nine, completing the work in 1913.

Since the discovery, the resort has named its entrance road Donald Ross Drive. Its score card proudly states it is a Ross design. And Fahey has been given the go-ahead to use his staff in his restoration efforts as well as resolve drainage and cart-path problems.

Bolstering the bunker work was the

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BRIEFS

HILLS' LEGENDARY RUN OPENS 9

CINCINNATI

— Legendary Run Golf Club, an 18-hole upscale public course here designed by Arthur Hills and Associates, opened its second nine on May 15. "Legendary Run is an intriguing golf course," said Hills. "The front nine, which is almost treeless, has a series of holes that are as good as any we have done; the back nine plays through deep, wooded ravines..."

PRESERVE PICKS PALMER

FENTON, Mich. — Arnold Palmer and Palmer Course Design Co. have selected to design the Preserve at Black Bear Resort here. The 18-hole championship course is being developed by the Preserve Corp. The Preserve at Black Bear Resort is scheduled to open during the summer of 2000.

Leaving behind other careers, Hammer opts for golf

By MARK LESLIE

SIREN, Wis. — "What would be your ideal job?" the career counselor asked civil engineer and MBA student Jim Hammer.

"To own a golf course," Hammer answered.

"Then why don't you?" the counselor asked.

That simple exchange several years ago, while civil engineer Hammer was two-thirds through his studies toward an MBA at the University of St. Thomas, changed his life.

"That question really got it rolling," recalled Hammer as he looked ahead to the opening of Siren Glen Golf Course here in midsummer 2000. "I decided then to chase my life dream of owning a golf course."

Married and working as a civil engineer, Hammer realized that something more fulfilling awaited him. He had returned to school part-time to pursue his MBA when he had that fateful meeting in 1993 with the career



Jim Hammer stands at the championship tee for the par-3, 240-yard 8th hole at Siren Glen Golf Course. Some 40 feet below, a pond will hug the green to the right and rear.

counselor. He was in a perfect position to tailor his education toward his dream. He enrolled in a course on

entrepreneurship and venture management and used the in-class training to

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Hammer's dream: Siren Glen

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prepare for his real-life dream.

Then Hammer got really serious, quit his job in 1994 and spent the next three years learning the ropes:

- toiling on a golf course grounds crew at a golf course in 1994;
- working in a pro shop on a daily-fee course in 1995; and
- working for a general contractor building the nine-hole Glen Lake course here in 1996, followed by two months working with an irrigation firm installing a system at an area country club.

"I wasn't expecting to become an expert in any field. I only wanted to be good enough to do it once," said the civil engineer, referring to his role as general contractor overseeing construction of Siren Glen.

The year working in maintenance, he said, "was a soul-searching time. I knew I loved playing the game and loved the idea of the environment of golf courses. But my engineering licenses were good and I wanted to make sure [golf ownership] was something I wanted to do. That was confirmed my second year working in the clubhouse, which was quite a different setting than the grounds crew. I enjoyed the interaction with customers."

While working those golf course jobs, Hammer and his wife Colleen, a budget analyst and computer systems support person at the city of Minneapolis Public Works Dept., searched for an appropriate piece of ground.

"We looked for location, features and price," Hammer said. "Getting the three variables took awhile."

What they finally found, he said, was a perfect 160 acres — with a 100-foot elevation change and two-thirds wooded with 100-year-old white pines, oak and maple. The property sits a one-hour-and-20-minute drive from downtown Minneapolis in a recreation area with 5,000 to 6,000 second homes and in a town, he said, that is becoming a tourist destination.

"We see the market as comprised of, one, the commuter golfers from the metropolitan area — because good courses are harder to get on in Minneapolis, golfers drive over two hours to get on a good course — and, two, the recreational property owners and their guests," Hammer said.

He feels Siren Glen will be one of the better tracks in the region.

Golf course architect T.L. Haugen of Shakopee, Minn.,

who owns two courses and has designed about a dozen courses in Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota, "fit the course into the property real nicely," Hammer said. "We got over 7,000 yards from the tips, water is in play on eight holes, we'll have bentgrass greens, tees and fairways and we will

have four sets of tees. It's going to be a great golf course. People ask about signature hole and it could be one of eight holes."

It is, indeed, his dream come true, Hammer acknowledges, adding his accolades for Colleen. "I would not nor could not have done it without her," Hammer said. "We went from a two-income family with no kids to a one-income family

with one child. That created some challenges but we managed to get through those. She has been providing the income because working at golf courses in the capacities I did, you don't make a lot of money."

With Colleen's assistance on planning, permitting and financing, Haugen's help with permitting, design and construction and an advisory board of other experts, spade finally

turned earth last September.

It was no small chore for a person who did not have the small fortune necessary to build a course.

FINANCING

"We have a sizable bank loan with SBA [Small Business Administration] participation," Hammer said. "Plus the vast majority of our life savings is invested in it, and about two

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NIAGARA FALLS — Two of Canada's leading golf course architects, Thomas McBroom and Douglas Carrick, have been chosen to design a 45-hole destination golf facility along the Niagara River Parkway, said The Niagara Parks Commission Chairman Brian Merrett.

McBroom and Carrick teamed up for the first time to win the bid to design the 700-acre devel-

Carrick, McBroom team up along Niagara

opment south of Niagara Falls. Each will design his own 18-hole course, and combine their talents on a nine-hole executive course and practice facility.

"Our goal is to attract golfers from across the country and around the world, to golf Niagara again and again," said Merrett. "This facility will act as a catalyst

for Niagara's entire golf industry, and will serve as a major draw, clearly putting Niagara on the international golf tourist market."

The Niagara Parks Commission is taking a lead role in the plan to market Niagara as a golf destination. The commission recognizes the golf industry as an opportunity to add a significant piece to

Niagara's tourist infrastructure, fitting in with such attractions as Casino Niagara, the burgeoning estate wine industry, and the Shaw Festival.

"This is a very ambitious project. Golfers will be able to play two distinctively different ... courses," said McBroom.

Of the design, Carrick said,

"We will incorporate the scenic, natural environment of the land, including Ussher's Creek and the spectacular view of the Niagara River. Our goal is to combine the natural beauty and environment with a challenging, yet highly playable course."

Construction of the courses is slated to begin in October and be completed in September 2000. The facility is scheduled to open in July 2001.

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Siren Glen

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dozen family and friends have purchased stock. The last component is prepaid packages, where people get golf privileges for advanced tee times."

BUILDING

Hammer used his civil engineering background and golf course training to lower the costs of construction, citing "sweat equity" as his greatest savings. "From planning to doing legwork for the architect, being the general contractor and saving the general contractor markup — it has paid off," he said.

Hammer's background exposed him to all facets of construction, including earthwork, drainage systems and stormwater studies. He hired an excavation contractor who did the heavy work, dug the irrigation pond and performed some significant land shaping.

Haugen used his own bulldozers to shape greens and tee complexes. In all, about 75,000 cubic yards of earth were moved.

Though he expects the course to open in midsummer next year, Hammer has mapped out a long-range plan for improvements to the facility.

"For instance," he said, "we only built a few sand bunkers. We will add them as we go. I look at it as a 5- to 10-year project. It will be a \$3-million project when we're done."

Hammer is leasing a structure for a clubhouse for the first three or four seasons.

"It's primarily economic," he said. "A new golf course takes a few years to reach full stride in terms of volume of play. Until the potential is there for the complimentary or spin-off revenues in pro shop and food and beverage, it's hard to justify a \$300,000 to \$400,000 clubhouse. That can be a fatal flaw."

For the kid who started golfing when he was 12, who played on his high school golf team and attracted the attention of some small college golf coaches, fatal flaws are to be avoided when pursuing his dream. He thinks that will be more than evident when he opens Siren Glen's doors next year.